

# Diffusion and Dissemination of Research

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Diffusion and dissemination have long been concerns of cancer control, starting with its early history in promoting the adoption of the Pap smear test for the prevention and early detection of invasive cervical cancer. The gap between ideal practices and reality has long been recognized. Over the years, NCI and its relevant cancer control divisions have undertaken efforts to accelerate the dissemination of proven interventions. These have included the Community-based Cancer Control Programs in the 1970s, the Community Clinical Oncology Programs (CCOPs) in the 1980s, and Prescribe for Health in the 1990s. While we have learned modestly from each of these efforts and others, none has achieved all that was hoped.

Generally, knowledge does not translate into practice until a number of other factors, often political and institutional, fall into place. Lomas (1997) argued that the “current failings of dissemination and uptake have more to do with miscommunication—inappropriate dissemination, limited commitment to uptake, lack of understanding, and unrealistic expectations of each others’ environments—than with unavailability of research or an absent need for it in decision making” (p. 22).

It is increasingly clear that the continued investment in new discoveries in health promotion and cancer prevention and control, while absolutely necessary, is not sufficient to guarantee the adoption and implementation of evidence-based interventions to reduce the burden of cancer. This is of particular concern with respect to low-income, ethnically diverse, and otherwise underserved populations who, while bearing an unequal burden of cancer, often are slow to benefit from research discoveries. Because of this, our failure as a nation to ensure the rapid dissemination and quick implementation of evidence-based interventions has contributed to health disparities observed in cancer risk factors like tobacco use and cancer outcomes.

In this presentation, a number of these issues will be explored briefly in relation to NCI-sponsored programs to translate research into improved outcomes and the need to move the lessons learned from tobacco control research more swiftly into practice.

Lomas, J. *Improving research dissemination and uptake in the health sector: beyond the sound of one hand clapping*. Hamilton, Ontario, Canada: Center for Health Economics and Policy Analysis. McMaster University, 1997.